

Members:

Rep. Vanessa Summers, Chair
Rep. Markt Lytle
Rep. Robert Alderman
Rep. Cleo Duncan
Sen. Richard Worman
Sen. Kent Adams
Sen. Allie Craycraft
Sen. Joseph O'Day

Lay Members:

Hugh Beebe
Capt. Michael Carmin
Nan Daley
Donna Ott
Herbert Grulke
Becky Zaseck

LSA Staff:

Susan Preble, Fiscal Analyst for the Commission
Ann Naughton, Attorney for the Commission

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COMMISSION ON AUTISM

Legislative Services Agency
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MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: September 8, 1998
Meeting Time: 10:30 A.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington St.,
Room 156-B
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 4

Members Present: Rep. Vanessa Summers, Chair; Rep. Robert Alderman; Rep. Cleo Duncan; Sen. Richard Worman; Sen. Kent Adams; Sen. Allie Craycraft; Hugh Beebe; Capt. Michael Carmin; Nan Daley; Donna Ott; Herbert Grulke; Becky Zaseck.

Members Absent: Rep. Markt Lytle; Sen. Joseph O'Day.

CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING REMARKS

Rep. Summers called the meeting to order at 1:20 p.m. She stated that the Commission's budget allows for three additional meetings, during which she would like to focus on developing legislation for the 1999 legislative session.

FSSA PRESENTATION ON WAIVER PROCESS AND BARRIERS

Debra Wilson, Director, Division of Disability, Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DDARS), Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA),

thanked the Commission for the opportunity to testify, and apologized for the lack of appropriate staff from FSSA at the Commission's meeting on August 8. Ms. Polite indicated that the three FSSA divisions involved in the waiver process will be meeting on September 17 to discuss waiver issues. She asked to be on the next meeting's agenda to make a presentation regarding delays in filling waiver slots and potential streamlining of the waiver process. Rep. Summers agreed to include Ms. Polite on the next meeting's agenda.

CURRENT STATUS OF GROUP HOMES

Sue Lindborg, Christole, Inc.

testified before the Commission regarding the CSHCS program. She distributed brochures written in English and Spanish and stated that the program is completely funded with state dollars and covers children from birth to the age of 21, or 26 in the case of individuals with cystic fibrosis.¹ Ms. Albright explained that the program requires a family's income to be at or below 250% of the federal poverty level guidelines. She reported that the program serves as a last resort mechanism, and can help cover a variety of costs, including some medical services, pharmaceuticals, and hospitals stays. Ms. Albright stated that if the program was modified to cover children with autism, eligible children would be those who are not on the waiver, not financially eligible for Medicaid, have a diagnosis of autism, and whose family income does not exceed 250% of the federal poverty guidelines. Ms. Albright referenced the Department of Education, FSSA's First Steps program and Dr. Greg Wilson, a local autism expert, as additional resources for individuals. In response to a question from the Commission, Ms. Albright stated that the CSHCS program is expanding its coverage from 3,500 to 8,000 families.

Rep. Summers then asked Ms. Ann Naughton, Staff Attorney, to prepare draft legislation which would require CSHCS to cover eligible individuals with autism by statute.

ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS BILLED BY SERVICE PROVIDERS

Costa Miller, Indiana Association of Rehabilitative Facilities (IN-ARF)

distributed a copy of her remarks and stated that her husband's insurance through Signa Health Care will not cover anything related to autism.² She expressed her frustration and concern that her family can no longer afford pediatric psychiatric visits and can only find one doctor who has any experience with autism. Ms. Krebs also related her difficulty communicating with the insurance company. She reported that she wrote the company a letter per their request two months ago, but has yet to receive a response. Ms. Krebs explained that until very recently, she did not know about the autism waiver or the Indiana Resource Center for Autism in Bloomington.

Sen. Worman explained that the General Assembly cannot regulate employer self-insured programs due to the passage of ERISA (Employee Retirement Income Security Act) by Congress in 1974. He advised Ms. Krebs to contact her congressmen, President Clinton and the Department of Labor.

As recommended by Rep. Duncan's, the Commission voted to draft a resolution to request that the President and Congress consider requiring self-insured programs to provide coverage for autism.

Tracy Mitchell, CPA, Bradley & Associates,

distributed copies of her remarks and thanked the Commission for the opportunity to testify

¹Copies of the brochures are on file at the Legislative Information Center. (See footnote 1).

²A copy of the handout is on file at the Legislative Information Center. (See footnote 1).

about the lack of insurance coverage for her son through Indiana University's health plan.³ She stated that the denial of insurance coverage to individuals with autism is a violation of federal laws because it discriminates against individuals with autism. Ms. Githens also stated that the denial of such coverage does not make economic sense because it is less expensive to help an individual achieve independence through the early provision of services than it is for the state to support a dependent individual over the course of their lifetime. She testified that therapy and services do not have to be expensive. For example, she relayed her personal experience providing therapy to a 7-year old autistic boy who could not speak or otherwise communicate. Ms. Githens reported that therapy facilitated with the use of homemade play dough, balloons filled with different substances, a large pillow, and other similarly inexpensive items, the child is now is able to say some words, is learning sign language and appears to be learning to read and spell.

OTHER COMMISSION BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT

Rep. Summers declined to set the next meeting date and indicated a meeting notice would be sent out once a date was chosen. With there being no further business before the Commission, Rep. Summers adjourned the meeting.

³A copy of the handout is on file at the Legislative Information Center. (See footnote 1).